

Request for Nunavut Wildlife Management Board Approval of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area in Sarvarjuaq

Consultation and Engagement Summary

Partnerships

Since 2019, the Government of Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) have been working together to identify options for the conservation and protection of Sarvarjuaq and other sites within the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut. In 2021 a Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group) was created to advance the conservation and protection of the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs. The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group consist of members from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Transport Canada and the Government of Nunavut. The Working Group has supported the required processes to create the two potential Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order. The Working Group also provided awareness and shared information with the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) negotiation table as needed, with the objective to work in parallel. Only DFO, QIA and the Government of Nunavut travelled to the communities as part of the consultations for Sarvarjuaq.

Community Consultations

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group with members from QIA and DFO conducted two rounds of consultations from October 2023 to June 2024. The Government of Nunavut participated in the consultations as observers.

The first round of consultations occurred in Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq from October 24-27, 2023 and in Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay from January 16-18, 2024. During the first round of consultation meetings were held with the Hamlet Councils, Hunters and Trappers Organizations and the general public in each community. Unfortunately the public meeting in Qikiqtarjuaq scheduled for October 26 was cancelled due to bad weather. During all the meetings DFO's presentation began by introducing the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA, as well as discussing short and long-term protection goals and their associated timelines. A major point of DFO's presentation was introducing the MPA's draft conservation objectives and hearing feedback about the objectives. In all meetings, QIA also presented on the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model, discussing the pillars of the model and their vision for long-term protection as an IPCA. QIA also discussed Inuit stewardship, Indigenous-led governance, infrastructure support and fisheries reconciliation. Programs for monitoring and regional governance such as the Nauttisuqtiit Program were also covered.

In general during the first round of consultations, communities were supportive of protection and expressed interest in future economic opportunities in Sarvarjuaq adjacent communities. A common theme heard across communities was a desire to learn more about Sarvarjuaq as research continues, to be updated on the progress of the assessment and long-term protection options, and the importance of Inuit-led decision-making in conservation. There was also a desire across all communities to work together with communities in Greenland to discuss priorities for long-term management.

During first round of consultations, surveys were also handed out to the community members who were present. The survey consisted of questions regarding the objectives for the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA by

Ministerial Order and asked about the types of activities that were occurring in the area. The survey questions and a summary of the responses are included in the “What We Heard” Report.

During the first round of consultations there was a request for information to also be provided to communities through a newsletter that could be mailed to everyone who lived in the six communities. In the early spring of 2024 DFO distributed a newsletter to every PO box in all six communities. The newsletter introduced Sarvarjuaq and the history of work that has led to marine protection in the region. The newsletter also introduced Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order as a proposed short-term conservation tool along with Inuit Protected and Conserved Areas as QIA’s vision for long-term protection. Contact information and other opportunities for engagement were also included in the newsletter. DFO will continue to send newsletters to all six communities to provide updates on the progress for establishment.

During the first round of consultations there were also requests to hear more about the research that has been occurring in the Sarvarjuaq and surrounding areas. In February and March 2024, DFO visited all six communities to present updates on scientific research in the area. Where possible, school visits and radio presentations were also undertaken to provide information at the request of communities. The information was well received, and communities expressed that they would like to have increased involvement in research efforts moving forward.

The second round of consultations took place in Pond Inlet, Clyde River, and Qikiqtarjuaq from May 13-15 2024, and in Arctic Bay, Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord from June 3-7 2024. The second round of consultation meetings again were held with the Hamlet Councils, Hunters and Trappers Organizations and the general public in each of the six community. During these meetings DFO presented additional information regarding the proposed Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order including a review of the progress, an in-depth overview of the Ministerial Order as a protection tool, the proposed boundaries. DFO also presented on the regulatory intent that included an overview of economic activities or potential activities for the area and what activities we have documented as occurring within the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA. QIA presented more details about their vision of an Inuit Protected and Conserved Areas as a proposed long-term protection tool.

During the second round of consultations many community members again indicated their support for the proposed approach of establishing a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. Many comments highlighted the importance of Sarvarjuaq and protecting the area. Community members detailed the abundance of wildlife observed in Sarvarjuaq, the importance of the area as a wintering and breeding habitat and the importance of Sarvarjuaq as a hunting area. Concerns were shared about the potential negative impacts of industrial activity, vessel traffic and increasing tourism on the health of the ecosystem if Sarvarjuaq were not protected. There were also comments on allowing for local economic opportunities. In general there was a lot of support indicated for protecting Sarvarjuaq, and many requests for communities to be involved in the long-term management of the area.

In September 2024 DFO distributed “What We Heard Reports” to all six communities. These reports included meeting summaries for all communities in both round of consultations, feedback received from the community and responses to questions that came up during the meetings. The reports also included results of the survey and informed the communities that DFO would be seeking Support Letters as a next step in the process toward establishment.

In October 2024 DFO received letters in support of the Ministerial Order MPA from all six community Hunters and Trappers and Hamlet Councils. The Government of Nunavut has also provided a letter of support.

Other Stakeholders

Stakeholders were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The stakeholders engaged in this process included the following: the Nunavut Marine Conservation Target Steering Committee (represented by Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC], PC, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada [CIRNAC], Transport Canada, DFO, the Government of Nunavut Department of Environment, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), Nunavut Water Board, and Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board. Industry and non-government organizations included the Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., Shipping Federation of Canada, Woodward Group of Companies, Nunavut Fisheries Association, relevant stakeholders within the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee, Oceans North Canada and Greenland, World Wildlife Fund-Canada (WWF-Canada), Canadian Wildlife Federation, Ecology Action Centre, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Black Feather, Travel Nunavut, Atii (Let's go) Tourism, Arctic Kingdom, ArcticNet, Ice, Climate and Environment Laboratory, Nunavut Research Institute, Arctic Security Consultants, Canadian High Arctic Research Station, Polar Continental Shelf Program, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada, Greenlandic Institute of Natural Resources, Fishers and Hunters Association in Greenland and Greenland and the Government of Greenland.

DFO also engaged all implicated federal departments, including (but not limited to) ECCC, Transport Canada, Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Global Affairs Canada, and Department of National Defense.

In July 2024, DFO distributed letters to the identified stakeholders. These letters were provided in English, French and Inuktitut. The first letter informed stakeholders that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada were assessing short-term protection measures for Sarvarjuaq. The letter also introduced Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order as the proposed protection tool and requested feedback and information about ongoing and anticipated activities in the area. In October 2024, a second letter was distributed to stakeholders. The second letter outlined the proposed regulations for Sarvarjuaq, provided a list of the classes of ongoing activities. In the second letter, stakeholders were invited to provide comments and feedback on the proposed regulations. No feedback or comments on the proposed regulations were received.

In addition to the distribution of two stakeholder letters, DFO consulted with stakeholders further at their request. A meeting was held with Baffin Fisheries Coalition and representatives from the Government of Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Baffin Fisheries wanted more information about the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA and if it would impact their activities in the region. DFO conducted a presentation similar to that shared during community consultations indicating that fishing would be considered one of the classes of ongoing activities and therefore the activity could continue in the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA.

DFO provided an update to the NWMB at its October 31, 2024, quarterly meeting to notify that a submission and presentation would be made for their approval in February 2025.

DFO submitted a proposal to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) for conformity determination on November 6, 2024, on November 13 NPC accepted the proposal for review. On November 18, 2024, NPC referred the proposal to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for further screening and public comment period.

DFO presented to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) on the proposal on November 27, 2024, providing information on the community support letters received and notifying the Board that DFO would be seeking their endorsement. DFO will continue to engage the QWB on this site.

DFO sent notifications to partners, community HTAs and hamlet councils, as well as stakeholders in advance of pre-publication of the proposed new regulation in Canada Gazette, Part I. This 30-day public comment period opened during December and closed in January.